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ABSTRACT

Between 1979 and 1981, in-depth interviews were conducted with 76 faculty and staff members at community colleges in New York, Massachusetts, and California. During a series of three interviews, participants were asked to talk openly about their lives before they were employed at the college; the nature and quality of their day-to-day work activities; and the meaning of their work and its place in their lives. Self-contained profiles were constructed for 35 participants from verbatim transcripts of their interviews. An analysis of the profiles of three minority group participants, who were working in predominantly white community colleges in California, revealed that: (1) while issues of minority status were central to the experience of the participants, they also had to contend with the same issues currently facing all community college faculty (e.g., academic standards and student retention); (2) minority faculty were affected by the complex interaction of racism, social class, power, and opportunity; (3) many minority participants had resisted efforts by their schools and counselors to track them into non-academic vocational curricula; and (4) participants felt they had to work harder, do their job better, more thoroughly and conscientiously than their non-minority colleagues. The report describes the methodological considerations involved in indepth interviewing and includes the complete profiles of three minority group faculty members: a black counselor and teacher in her 30s; a Chicano history instructor in his 40s; and a Black physics teacher in his 40s. (AYC)

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The Few Among the Many:

Interviews of Minority Community College Faculty

A Paper Submitted to

the

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by

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The Few Among the Many:
Interviews of Minority Community College Faculty

Introduction

Since 1979 the authors of this paper have been doing research, based on in-depth interviewing, on the work of community college faculty and staff. The goal of our research has been to explore the nature and quality of the work of community college faculty, the interrelationships of that work and societal and organizational forces, and the meaning our participants make of their work. We believed that this exploration of the work of community college faculty would lend insight to understanding the efforts of community colleges to achieve some of their key goals, especially in the area of increasing equity of access to postsecondary education.

Our work has taken place in two stages. The first was sponsored by the Exxon Education Foundation. Under this grant we conducted interviews of faculty and staff in community colleges primarily in Massachusetts. In addition to providing data for our ongoing research, that study led to the production of a thirty-minute film which sampled issues of the work of community college faculty (Sullivan and Seidman 1981).

Our work under the Exxon grant led us to an appreciation of the issues involved in in-depth interviewing, the complexities of

the work of community college faculty, and a desire to expand our research. We applied for and received a two-year grant from the Program on Educational Policy and Organization of the National Institute of Education for a study titled: "The Work of Community College Teachers: A Study Through In-Depth Interviews." This grant allowed us to interview faculty and staff in community colleges in California and New York State as well as to interview additional participants in Massachusetts. This paper reports on an aspect of our research under these two grants: the work of community college faculty who are members of minorities and who work in settings in which they are a "few among the many."

Methodology

Under the two grants, we conducted in-depth interviews with a total of seventy-six faculty and staff participants (as well as twenty-five students) evenly distributed in Massachusetts, New York State and California. We selected participants who worked in nineteen different community colleges, in urban, suburban, and rural settings. In the process of selection we were guided by the nature of the national community college population in terms of the distribution of men and women, minority and nonminority faculty in academic and vocational fields, with and without advanced degrees.

Building on the phenomenological theory of Alfred Schutz (1967) and the work of Kenneth Dolbeare and David Schuman (Schuman 1982) we developed a research design based on a sequence of three in-depth interviews with each participant. Each interview in the series lasted an hour and a half; the interviews were normally spaced from three days to a week apart. Each interview was audiotaped.

Each of the three interviews had a distinctive purpose and focus. The first interview concentrated on the lives of the participants before their work in the community college. We asked our participants to reconstruct experiences with parents, family, neighborhood, schooling, and work, up to the point of their coming to the community college. The second interview focused on what it was like to work in the community college. We inquired about the range of the participants' activities and then asked them to reconstruct in concrete detail as many of those activities as possible. We concentrated less on their opinions and philosophies of education and more on what an actual day was like for them. The third interview focused on the meaning of our participants' work. We asked them how they made sense of their work, how they understood its place in their lives in the context of what they had discussed in the first two interviews.

Although each of the three interviews in the sequence had a specific focus and purpose, our interviewing technique, within the framework established for each interview, was open-ended. We

did not have a set of pre-established questions to which we were seeking answers, nor did we have a set of hypotheses which we were trying to confirm or reject. Our methodological goal was to have our participants reconstruct, and reflect on, their experience. Our primary task was to be active listeners. We most often asked questions when we did not understand something our participants were telling us, when we wanted participants to say more about an area they were discussing, or when we wanted to guide the discourse from an abstract to a concrete level.

Many interrelated methodological, epistemological, and ethical issues arise in the process of in-depth interviewing. The issue of developing an effective degree of trust between the interviewer(s) and participants is central to the method of in-depth interviewing. We came to understand that a primary element in building a degree of trust involved our being explicit about the basic structure and process of our research. Because we were not testing hypotheses or seeking information to predetermined questions, and because the focus of our interviewing was on the meaning our participants made of their experience, we think that the tension between our being explicit about our research and the possibility of distorting our data was greatly reduced. Therefore, from the time we made contact with our participants through the interviewing process itself, and encapsulated in an extensive written consent form, we were explicit about who we were, what we were doing, and how we intended to use the material we gathered. In addition, the

rights of the participants to withdraw from the process, the rights of the participants to exclude specific material, and what safeguards we might offer them in terms of their identity were spelled out. As we went about the process of making contact with potential participants, we used a minimum of intervening third parties so that we could take as much direct responsibility as possible for the level of explicitness we sought. Recognizing the importance of the issue of reciprocity (Glazer 1972), we attempted to be clear with our participants about what we wanted from them and what they could and could not expect from us.

By being open about our work, we hoped to secure an informed willingness to participate in our interviews. We thought that this level of information would move the interviewing relationship in the direction of equity between us and the participants. Moving toward that ideal, which we think is basic to the issue of trust in the interviewing relationship, is a complicated process. In the commentary following the three profiles, we will highlight aspects of that complexity that are especially germane to the subject of this paper.

We started our interviewing in December, 1979. We completed almost all interviews by the summer of 1982. We spent that summer and fall reading the verbatim transcripts which had been typed from the audiotapes of each interview. At least three readers carefully studied each transcript. We marked passages of

interest to us and subsequently labelled those passages according to specific social, historical, and organizational categories which we developed as we read during those six months.

In order to be as responsible as possible to both our participants and our data, we decided to present the main body of our findings about the work of community college faculty in the words of the individuals themselves. We believed that a vehicle for achieving this goal was to develop "profiles" of our participants. We conceived of a profile as a self-contained, in-their-own-words narrative of how the participants came to work in their community colleges, what their work was like, and what meaning they made of their work.

We discussed each participant's interview material, therefore, to assess whether or not the material we marked was suitable for a profile. We used the following criteria to guide our discussions: 1) comprehensiveness of material we had marked in each of the three interviews, 2) level of concrete reconstruction of the participant's experience, 3) issues of potential vulnerability of the participant, 4) sense of fairness to the total interview that such a profile would convey.

Of our seventy-six faculty and staff participants we have tentatively selected at this stage of our work thirty-five for whom we will develop profiles to be included in our Final Report to the National Institute of Education. In developing these

profiles we change the names of the participants and either change or eliminate the names of persons, places, and institutions close to them. Consistent with the letter and spirit of our agreement with the participants, we take additional steps to disguise the participant's identity as necessary.

We have composed the profiles almost totally in the participant's own words. The profiles represent between twenty percent and thirty percent of the participant's original interview material. In some cases, in order to make transitions between passages, we interject our words. Where such occurs, the words are placed in brackets. In some cases we edit out repetitions common to oral speech but which appear awkward in written form. We also edit out verbal or syntactical inconsistencies that occur when people extemporize. In all cases our final test in this composing process is whether the resulting profile is fair to the total interview process and to the participants themselves.

For the purpose of this American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting with its special attention on education in a multicultural, multilingual society, we are presenting the profiles of two community college faculty and one community college counselor who work in California. The salient characteristic of each participant's work setting is that it is "skewed." That is, the setting is one in which the relative number of faculty who would be considered members of a minority,

as compared to those who would be considered nonminority, is approximately one to ten (Kanter 1977, p.208). Kanter analyzes the effects of relative numbers on the experience of women at a corporation she studies. Her analysis suggests that relative numbers are significant in the experience of minority faculty. We believe that the profiles we are about to present speak poignantly to the issues Kanter raises. In a subsequent part of our research we plan to present profiles of minority faculty who work in settings that are "tilted": that is, ratios averaging 30 : 70 in terms of the relative numbers of minority faculty (Kanter, 1977, pp.206-242). In this paper we limit our material and our analysis to the experience of minority faculty who work in settings where their relative numbers are low. The profiles follow.

Cheryl Collins, a woman in her thirties, works as a counselor and teacher in a California community college. She was interviewed in the summer of 1981, once in her office and twice at her home.

I grew up in the city for the first ten years and then we moved to the suburbs when I was in fifth grade. When I was in the city I was a model student, I didn't have to do much except be quiet and good. I didn't have any idea of how bright I was or wasn't at that time. The idea in the city was to keep kids controlled and quiet. So I was good and clean and quiet. The neighborhood was integrated; I remember just playing and a lot of fun and a lot of warmth. My grandmother was around and my mother was working and my father was working and everything, you know, was terrific.

Like a lightning bolt, everything was turned totally upside down from what it was in fourth grade to what it was in fifth grade. My parents, what they were saying was, it's not that we don't trust you and love you and all that stuff. We just think you'll have a better chance in this other environment than you will in the city and we're going to give you the best shot we can. And even though we know all these other things are going to come up, we still feel that we can best guarantee your getting through college and being able to take care of yourselves if we make this move.

I remember looking down over the suburbs one time and saying to myself, "I beat you. I didn't let you beat me," and there was this sense that I had won, that the suburbs had in some way tried to take something from me and I didn't let it, didn't let that happen. I remember going to my ten-year high school reunion and being slightly amused that I might not remember who they were but they would damn sure know who I was. I mean there was no way that they could not have known; I would be the only Black person walking into the room. I got my hair done in a big afro and wore a long dress, it was just playing the role. Somehow I needed to do that. It was real clear to me that something had happened to me in that experience that hadn't happened to a whole lot of people and that I felt and still do feel that I had come out ahead. If I was the only Black person that they were ever going to know, it would be a positive experience for them.

At that time we were the only Black family in the town. Coming from a very mixed neighborhood and then moving out ... I guess it is hard not to work up the emotion that was involved in going through that process. Example: the first week or so that

I was in fifth grade, you had to pass a times tables test in order for the teacher to let you get into the book. She gave you a hundred little problems and you had to get through them in five minutes and miss no more than three in order to be allowed to get into the book. Well, in the city I had only been up to about the five or six times table so I was behind from the very beginning and it stayed that way for a couple of years. My mother practically went to school with me all over again, would sit up night after night after night tutoring and going and talking to the teachers. So by the time I was into seventh and eighth and ninth grade I was doing fine, but initially it was a real cultural shock to be out there. As well as all the stuff that goes along with being Black in an all-white area. Certain kids weren't allowed to play with me, and parents had ideas about what I was like and what I wasn't like and whether I should be at their house and whether their kid should be at my house and all that other stuff that goes along with that.

My parents had a very strong feeling about education, and their primary goal for us was that you will graduate from college. I knew I was going to college before I knew what college was. They were very clear that they wanted us to go to school. They got what they wanted, both of their kids have degrees. That was very very important to them, and they felt that we would get a much better education in the suburbs than we would in the city. And there is no question about that. When I was in the city they wouldn't let you take your books home because they didn't know what you were going to do with them. You didn't have homework in the city. We got out there, we had homework the first night . The kids that I grew up with in the suburbs--everybody was going to college.

Being behind from the very beginning and having to study so hard to catch up and feeling like I had to prove myself, I was a good little kid because everybody knew who I was. There was no way for me to go just anywhere in town;if they didn't know my name, they certainly knew that I was the Black kid. There were parts of that that were fun and then there were parts of it that were painful. Being identifiable all the time means that I was constantly aware when I would walk into a store or walk into a room that people were watching me. My behavior was being judged and generalized. There were certain kinds of situations where I felt that I had to be more careful or more good or as smart and as equal and well-dressed and as well-mannered and as well-whatever as anybody else, as strong or stronger. And to not let some of the racist little things that happened really touch me. Things like a parent deciding that I couldn't come to their house and I had never met the parent. So it wasn't me, it was the fact that I was Black. It wasn't that I had done anything "wrong". Somebody that I had grown up with, that lived down the street from me for seven or eight years and she got married and I couldn't go to the wedding because her grandmother didn't like Black people. I had never met her grandmother, you know. That

always shocked me, and sometimes there were some very gutsy people that I dealt with and some kids would defy their parents. I learned about where my own strengths were, what I could deal with and what was justice and what was fair. My mother and I were very close and still are, and she was very open; any time something hurt me or any time there was something that I didn't understand or any time I needed somebody to talk to, she was always very much there. And my brother and I--we talked a lot.

By the time I got into high school, I did everything that was social with the exception of dating. I was in what would be considered the top group. I was in that group and the line was only drawn racially when it was junior prom or the senior ball. I decorated for all those things and then turned around and walked out. I was very active, I was very athletic and on all kinds of committees. By that time I had been there for three or four years **and** I was pretty clear about who my friends were, where the limits were, what things I could do and what things I couldn't do. And there weren't that many things that I couldn't do, with the exception of those real close interpersonal male, female things. And yet I found that I had several male friends in a different way than maybe the other girls had them; there were several **guys** who would come by and see me and talk to me.

Some of the offices that I ran for were clearly encouraged, were brought up to me, by teachers. Why don't you do this or why don't you run for this or why don't you get involved in this. The teachers were very supportive. I had a lot of good teachers. I can't remember having any negative experience from teachers with the exception of one geometry teacher who gave me an F. Which didn't have anything to do with racial stuff. I just wasn't a real good math student. Geometry and math have always been real hard for me. I was staying after and I was seeing him as often as I could after class and working. He still gave me an F. Home ec was going to prepare me for marriage or something and I didn't know what I was really going to do with it. I knew I was going to college. I just have an image of hearing my parents talk about it. My parents, neither of them has a college degree. There is really nobody in my immediate family, uncles and aunts, who have college degrees. Our parents both were civil servants, one worked for the army and one worked for the navy. My mother always worked as far as I can remember. As I look back, nobody really talked to me about not going into home economics, that there were other possibilities. AndI was getting good grades and I was accepted at the state college. Nobody ever talked about anything other than home ec which was my idea. Nobody talked about scholarships. At that time so many women were trapped, period. Without even dealing with the racial thing, that was perfectly acceptable to be in home economics. It was certainly good preparation for the position that one expected a woman to be in. Most girls I think were going to be English majors or history. There wasn't a strong push for professional jobs even in the suburbs. There was the push for

going to college but that was more in terms of your being able to be a good wife and being able to talk to your professional husband who was going to be a doctor or a lawyer or something else. There wasn't at that time a lot of discussion about women being professionals, other than teaching.

The community college, they tell you in high school, is a high school with ashtrays. I never had that experience, never had the feeling once I got here, I mean it was wonderful. It just opened me wide up. I had just excellent teachers and the freedom and going to plays, the productions that were on campus here. I was going to be a home ec teacher. And the first psychology class that I took was from a teacher who just awed me; I couldn't imagine that people actually studied stuff like that, and I was really turned on. I knew that I was going to major in psych. So I took all the psych classes that I could possibly take here, and then transferred to the state college and discovered their idea of psychology and my idea of psychology were quite different. While at the community college, I was working part time and I was working twenty-five hours a week and taking eighteen and a half units and doing some volunteer work on Saturday and it was great.

I remember how available the teachers were. They weren't tricky. If you were in class and if you studied and if you had problems,they were always available to talk to. I spent many hours in one teacher's office trying to go over the chemistry and the physics and the astronomy and he was always really helpful. I can't think of any teachers that I had that I didn't feel that I could go to their offices and talk to them. I never felt that it was in any way a waste of my time, or that I wasn't getting a good preparation to go on. In fact when I had gone on I realized that I did get a good strong preparation here. I had had my writing critically analyzed; it reminded me that I was no longer in high school, that I was in college. It really tightened me up. ...I am trying to think about how many women I saw as college professors. I don't remember very many.

When John Kennedy died, I remember what happened on campus on that day. Hearing about him being shot at home and coming on to school and walking into the lunchroom and the absolute quiet and absolute silence in that room and watching people pass by me in tears and upset and meeting my friends and leaving campus and we all went to a church and all talked about what that experience was like for us. I remember the beginning of some marches around campus, not against the campus but in protest to things that were going on in the country.

I had fantasized about going to a Black college in the south or going to one of the colleges in Atlanta, but it just wasn't financially feasible. I didn't push for it because I didn't feel like we could afford it. After having grown up in

the suburbs there was some desire to find out how the other culture lived which was in fact my culture. I knew very very little about what it was like to live with Black people. I knew a whole lot at that time about what it was like to live in a white community, but I didn't know very much about being Black. There were about fifty Black students at the community college when I came here. I went to the state college because I felt that once I had gone through two years of junior college I really wanted to get out of town.

When I transferred to the state college, so many Black students were in sociology as opposed to psych that again I was isolated because I was a psych major. I didn't realize what I was getting into. That was pretty difficult to get there and discover that they didn't have the same understanding of psych that I had. And I felt like I was always behind because I was having trouble running rats through mazes. I still felt conspicuous among Black people. But I did date and I did know Black students. Really wasn't until I got into graduate school, it wasn't really until I was in my mid-twenties that I found a large group of people in this area and large organizations that I felt comfortable in.

After college graduation I remember being at home and being depressed because there wasn't anything. My parents after all this sacrifice had told me that once you got a degree, people would be beating down the doors to give you a job. People were telling me that I was either overqualified or underqualified. And I had been away from home and I didn't want to be home. I had lived independently for a couple of years. I didn't want to be back home and dependent on them. Even though I had worked all the way through that four years of school, I was still mostly financially dependent on them. And I was really feeling that I had just had it with school. I just didn't want to do that anymore. If this degree wasn't going to allow me to do what I wanted to, then there was no guarantee that the next one was going to allow me to do what I wanted to either.

So, I was just job hunting at home. And I came to the community college because I had some of my best academic years here. I came by to see people, to say hello and to see some old teachers, and somebody mentioned a person to me. They said, "Have you talked to him?" And I went down and I talked to him and he started talking to me about graduate school. I just didn't think I had the grades to get in. I didn't think that I had the motivation to get through. He started pressing and saying, "Well, if you were going to go, where would you go and if you were going to do this,...." and I was out of school in March and by June I was back in school, in counseling, because at the time he knew that the college would be looking for a Black female counselor. So it looked like there was at least the possibility of a job. That was in the late sixties, and there weren't very many Black professionals at that time coming through

who could fill jobs.

Once I got to the university that first summer, it was like tnat first psychology class, it was wonderful, those classes were real exciting , the people were great. I was learning and not having any trouble. I just zoomed through in about two years and loved it. In the meanwhile, in that second year I got hired at this college.

The community college years and the master's degree years were the best. I was finally doing what I wanted to do. I was taking classes that meant something to me. The university was the real thing. Classes were small. You got to know all the students who were going through with you and there was a significant number of Black students in the program. There were only about seventy but fifteen or twenty of them were Black and they did have the same values system that I did and they did have the same goals. We worked together and studied together and got clients together. And I had a Black advisor which I had never had. If I could have gone for a doctorate at the university I probably would have.

I didn't get hired at first as a counselor. I got hired as a teacher. I had three classes, a basic psychology class and two Black psychology classes. Black psych had never been taught on this campus before and I certainly had never taught it before and I'd never taken Black psychology before, so we were all kind of starting at ground zero. I can remember that first year actually having anxiety attacks. My first year of graduate school I was teaching at the college from eight to ten in the morning, then drove to the university and was doing my first year of internship over there. That was from like twelve to four, then I was in class from four to seven. I mean I drove about eighty miles a day and it meant that I changed roles at least four times a day from teacher to counselor to student to therapist. That was the most mind-boggling year that I ever experienced. I was tired all the time, but I was learning so much it was almost too much for me to make any sense. I mean it feels like that there has always been stress from the time I first moved to the suburbs until now. Going into classrooms, preparing at home and going in and thinking something should last for an hour and it lasting for ten minutes and the room spinning around and going outside and having a cigarette and saying, "This is awful, this is terrible," but knowing I had to go back the next day, I had to go back. I tell people now that the only good thing about being a first-year teacher is that you never have to be a first-year teacher again.

I thought about the doctorate. Part of the reason, to be honest with you, is a very typical female reaction: it's not particularly easy for a man to relate to somebody who has a master's degree in counseling or background in psychology and then you add on a Ph.D., then the pickings are even slimmer at

that point. I was feeling that I had spent a lot of time going to school and doing a lot of preparation for professional stuff and that in some way I had let the personal side of me go someplace and I didn't have time to go out. I was very active professionally, and feeling much better about my teaching. I was getting to be twenty-six, twenty-seven, twenty-eight, and thinking, hey, if you don't settle in and start paying attention to your personal life, you know, then you may end up being single. Well, by the time I got to be thirty that seemed to be okay. That's when I started giving more serious consideration to going back for the doctorate. I still haven't given up the idea of the doctorate to this day. It still rummages around in there. The thing about a Ph.D. in counseling is that, given the community college, I'm not sure that it would prepare me to do any more than what I am already doing. I am considering now a doctorate in administration. I like this community college and I get paid very well to be here and I have three months off. I think I came to the decision that a Ph.D. in clinical psych was not going to buy me anything more in this job than what I already have.

I spent the first year doing the part-time teaching. I was hired as an instructor to teach classes three-fifths time and then the position of counselor came open. So I got hired the next year as a counselor. Now I am the division chair. Counseling work is threefold. We do personal counseling, academic counseling, and educational counseling. It's real exciting to talk to students about majors, and to help them find a major or talk through a program, or set up a program. But I wouldn't want to do that for the whole time that I was in my office. Career counseling is simply not my strong point. I also run groups , they are called counseling groups, not therapy groups, but what they are are therapy groups, where students get together once a week for an hour and a half and talk about whatever personal problems or situations they may need some help in. I like to do that. I find those groups tend to be primarily women which is not particularly uncommon not only in a school system but outside of the school system. During the day I have more women in that situation than I do men. The groups and the personal therapy get me away from the day-to-day "what does it take to transfer to the university" situation.

Then I teach. I usually teach one class a semester. It may be in the evening and it may be during the day. There have been very few semesters when I haven't taught something at least once a semester. I like the change, I like the change about the job, I like the fact that I can see somebody in personal counseling, I like seeing groups, I like being in front of the classroom. Most recently I've taught psych of women. I've taught Black psych, I've taught fundamental aspects of psych, I've taught social psychology of women. I lead a structured class, I demand a lot of work. I have a pretty strong reputation for what I do in a classroom.

At the beginning , because I was an inexperienced teacher and an inexperienced counselor at the time and I was the youngest in the whole system, I took everything that I did really seriously. I don't feel quite that way anymore. I enjoy teaching much more. The same with counseling. I don't take so much on as my total responsibility. I try to tell students that we'll try to work through this process together. Some of it is my responsibility and I'll help. You need to check out this and to check out this and look at this and then come back and we'll talk about it. It is still your life and your decisions. I think that at the beginning I took on much more responsibility for students and felt like I was responsible for them. Trying to find that balance. And I tell them, "I will talk to you about the kinds of classes that you need to take, but I won't set up the schedule." Some of them just want you to do that, you know, and I won't do that. I don't think that facilitates independence on their part. It makes them dependent on me and I don't see that my responsibility is to make them dependent on me as a counselor. I think that it is my responsibility to make them not need me. My function is to become obsolete in a couple of semesters. We are seeing the eighteen-, nineteen-year-olds but we are also seeing more of the twenty-five to thirty-five or forty-year-old students and those students can't be in school full time. The eighteen-year- old who comes and goes for four semesters and takes a full load and leaves, we don't see that student very much anymore.

We had some Black students who had some difficulty coming into the counseling center. The structure in the center, there's that big desk and it's not a real friendly place to be in. One Black student came in and got into my office and had to bring a friend with her. I mean the system just intimidated her. I ended up having to talk to the department chair at the time and his impression was, "Hey, this is a wonderful, beautiful, lovely center, I mean, why would somebody not come in here to see you?" What I needed to do and what I did do, was go down and sit in the cafeteria for a while and then once I made some initial contacts with the students, say, "Now go up and make an appointment to see me."

The first year that I taught social psychology of women, at the end of that, a lot of stuff around roles and a lot of stuff around assertiveness, those women left that class really angry. And they began to make changes and their husband or kids or whatever hadn't been through that process with them. They go home and it is often very difficult for them to share it with somebody who is not also open and who maybe hasn't supported their going back to school. For a couple of years I was seeing a lot of women who were in their forties and fifties who were going through divorces after being married for 25 or 30 years. That was real tough.

The other half of my job is time doing division chair

business. Signing papers. It is a lot of paper work. Requests for using a room in the counseling center. Minutes. We go over the minutes from the meetings, those have to be okayed. Those kinds of things. Then of course stuff comes in, requests from other division chairs and heads of counseling around the state. How many counselors do you have? What is your load? They want to know what are we doing and so there are requests for: what's the staff breakdown, what is the ethnic breakdown, what is the sex breakdown, salaries, that kind of information. We have what is called a college transfer day that we do in the fall and that's a big event for us.

There is a division-chair meeting with the president every other week. The president sits at one end of the table and the dean of instruction sits at the other end of the table and the rest of us sit and listen. It is a very structured meeting. It's very formal to me. I'm the only female full division chair. There is another woman who goes there because she is a dean. I chaired a scholarship committee, I've been on the affirmative action committee, I've been on the steering committee in the department. There have been other committees that I have been on on campus.

I still find myself being on guard for things in meetings. I think that language changes when I come in. I think it is a combination of not only being female but I think that there is the issue of being young, being Black. I mean it's often very hard for me to figure out which one of those things that they are responding to, if any. I have to be aware of the issues around minority people and around women. When I go into a meeting--whatever issue is being discussed--I have to filter it through "what does this mean to Black students?" Whenever I go into a meeting I feel like I carry in that responsibility because in most meetings I am the only minority person, and maybe the only woman. It is trying to filter through not only what it means to a campus at large, but trying to represent also women and minority students, because when I go back then to another meeting that is with women or when I am talking to other women or other Black faculty, then they see me as their representative. It is like I can't just go in and sit at a meeting. If somebody is going to speak up about how does this affect women, or is this fair to women, or fair to minority students, I feel like I have to represent that. It does feel like pressure because sometimes I'll go into those meetings and I'll try to think through, "am I seeing everything?" There may not be somebody else there to bounce that off and sometimes I'll make a mistake and I'll go back and say, "I didn't think of that."

The concerns of the Black issues are not the same as the women's issues. When we are talking about women, we are talking about--in general-- white women. Sometimes they expect me to be able to speak to those kinds of issues and sometimes I can't do

it. And sometimes I don't want to do it. Sometimes I just want to be there and be me and listen to what is going on and sit back and not be smart. You know, and just exist like some of the rest of the people around the table. But I can't, I don't feel like I can very easily do that. In terms of the young Black woman issue, I feel like I have to be a little bit more assertive in that place maybe than a male; I mean, I have noticed that the secretaries for instance will call the men Mr. or Dr. but they call me Cheryl.

I have to admit that counselors don't have--I don't know on other campuses--but counselors don't have a really strong reputation. We get a bad rep from any student who comes through and thinks that they haven't gotten good counseling. We don't bring in money into the system because we don't teach. The number of students that we see and counsel, we don't get paid for them in the same way that the rest of the campus does. I think that many teachers think that we don't do anything. I think it is hard to be a counselor. I don't think that we are seen in the same way, having the same status as a teacher does. Recently the campus voted for us to have extra hours. Nobody else's load got increased and our load got increased. The whole faculty approved that. We couldn't get them to see that if they get our load, that you're next--at least the potential is there. But we were vulnerable. And that to me was an indication that they didn't see us as faculty members. It was saying, "you're not the same as us." The counselors were really upset about that. People retreated and went to their offices. Said, "Here is my schedule, I am not doing anything else but this."

We had an article written in the paper once by a student who said that she had been to the counseling center and had gotten wrong information. Things change so quickly in counseling that it is very difficult to keep up on those changes and sometimes we make mistakes. But I think that we pay a very very heavy price for those mistakes in terms of status. And teasing, people who are fairly close to me, they come through and it is in a joking manner. But when there is that much joking around, you can't help but feel that there is stuff behind that. It's like, "you guys don't do anything over here all day. Every time I come through here you are just sitting," or something like that. Well, it's just, it's wearing. Counselors feel that they are not valued in the system for what they do do.

One thing that I was thinking about after the last two interviews was that I was sounding more like a crusader in some fashion as far as the Black issue was concerned and the women's issue was concerned, and that it felt like I was saying that I had evaluated every deed and every relationship somehow through those two perspectives. I feel that it is important to me to say that I think that some people don't like me just because I am me.

You know I don't evaluate everybody and decide that they are either a racist or a sexist or an ageist or something. Those things are very important to me, but I try not to be fanatical about them.

There are a lot of really neat things that make it a lot of fun for me to be at the community college. I mean there are just endless things to do. I really enjoy that part of it, that opportunity to continually learn. I have a very good salary for a person who is my age, as well as a female Black person. I make a lot of bucks. I don't feel caught or trapped economically in some ways that I think many women feel. Like I can't leave because you know I can't afford to leave or whatever. My husband and I stay together because we like to be together, not because I would ever feel that I couldn't afford to split if it came to that. That may sound negative, but it's a real nice secure feeling to feel. If I say I want to buy a house , I don't expect my credit or my name or my anything to be questioned. When we fill out those papers, and they see "division chair"-- "Oh, you're a teacher" or "you're a counselor and a community college teacher." That's a different kind of acknowledgement than you actually get on campus itself. People will assume that if I say I am a teacher, they certainly want to make me an elementary school teacher; but when you're at a community college and then you're also in psychology and counseling, very often people are intimidated.

I think that we counselors do tend to be the scapegoats. There are places outside this college that I feel more appreciated than actually on campus. I don't like it. It feels unfair, feels like I have to work harder. It feels like it puts me back in a place of having to prove my competence. Angry, frustrated, but none of those feelings are heavy enough. It's like they are there, but the goodies that I get are good enough to outweigh those things. I'm not disillusioned or disenchanted . They are things to deal with but they are not things that wear me out or depress me or that I get gloomy about. They are like, you know, that's the pits , but it's like, well, now we have to go out and try to do something about it.

It is like the double duty kind of thing. For those of us who still do have the energy, to go out and make contact with the division chair of the math department, to have some input to these different places. We generally have to go out and do that. They don't come to us. They will listen to us. It feels like we are the watchdog on the campus. We are trying to look out for the students' interests as opposed to sometimes what is most expedient for the computer or whose turn it is to teach, as opposed to what the students need.

I think that one would have more influence the higher one gets in the system. That may not be true. The reality may be that once you get higher in the system you have less. But I think, in terms of decision-making, in terms of how money might

be disseminated, what programs might be left in the system, and some awareness of the minority issues and women's issues at that level, it might be best taken care of by somebody like me. The next step, if I were going to do it, I would think that I would want to do it within the next couple of years. I've talked to someone about getting into the university administrative credentialing program. So I'm trying to figure out what it would mean with my family and husband. He said, "Do it."

What I am right now is a counselor-teacher. I'm not too sure that this is the most satisfaction that I can get. I am going back to the Black and female business. There are so few Blacks and/or females at that level that a couple of us need to go up there and find out what those folks are doing. And then if I decide that I don't want to do that ... But I may need to find that out for myself. I don't know how many faculty members there are at this college, but there are a bunch and there are only two Black females. And two Black female full-time folks is not a lot. There is one female Black administrator. I don't think that there's any question, that female Black administrator gets information that comes across her desk that she makes sure that I and other Black faculty members get. She notices things. I think that I have sensitized some of the other faculty members and some other women in my own staff to notice those things for themselves as well as for me. They'll sometimes now see things and then they'll check it off and send it to me, and I think that it is just because I am there physically that they remember to do that and I have made my interest obvious to them.

I guess I am having a hard time thinking I will be a counselor for forty years and didn't ever try anything else. One needs to challenge oneself and try other things and I would not like to say that I was the same thing for forty years. If I were going to be a counselor for the next forty years, if that's going to be it, then I also want to do a lot of gardening or I want to be a good cook or I want to be in class, I want something else. It feels like I want a constant challenge. I like to work the challenge to the point where I've gotten good at it before I move on. I don't just want to have stuff thrown at me all the time.

I heard my father say very recently that he felt that when I was growing up that whatever I made up my mind to do I would do, that he felt that I was a very strong-willed person and that he really admired that. He's not very verbal about what he feels, but I know more about what he feels when he introduces me to people and tells them what I do. Rather than telling me directly that he's proud of me or that he thinks that what I've done is neat, he's done it more by telling other people about me. I mean he tells them that I work at a college and he tells them that I am the division chair. He tells them about our house. My mother came to this house before we moved in and walked around. Practically had tears in her eyes. It meant to her that her

daughter was taking care of herself and being taken care of in a way that meant a great deal to her as a mother. I caught myself turning around and looking at her and her saying to my grandmother about how it does her heart good to see her daughter in a home like this.

You know, I was always very proud of my parents. My mother worked all the time that I was in school. I have very strong feelings about her and her ability to work and raise a family and I just assumed I could do that. I remember when I was first hired at the college. That was difficult for me because I had never taught before and was thinking about going in front of a classroom. I was able to tell her how afraid I was and how scared I was and she just said, you know, as she had always done years before, "You can do it, you can do it." You know, this was a place that I had been moving toward in some fashion and that I could do it. She's very proud of what I'm doing and yet there is a separation between us because our lives are quite different in many ways. She got married when she was nineteen. I got married when I was thirty-two. She had a year of college. I had six. She bought a house with her husband when she had a couple of kids, I bought my house before I was married. So there's a big contrast really in the way that we lived our lives in some ways and yet she's just always been super, very supportive.

My daughter is so new I don't really know what it is going to mean to me in terms of my work. I like to work, you know, I think that's important for me to do that. I already know that she pulls some things from me that have never been pulled from me before. Some new stuff that I hadn't really thought about before, and I'm sure that there will be years and years of that. Having a child gives me credibility in my classes; it gives me some sensitivity that I couldn't really have without the experience. I feel I have to keep going because right now I'm at a very respectable level, being the division chair, a college instructor. In fifteen years I still want to be doing some other interesting things for her to model. I don't want to just stop here.

Daniel Ramirez teaches history in a California community college. He is in his forties. He was interviewed in his office in the summer of 1981.

I came from the central valley of California. I lived in a series of small agricultural towns. In the area I came from the towns were seventy or eighty percent Mexican. We always identified ourselves as Mexican as opposed to American. The mentality there was us versus them, "Mexicanos" and "Americanos" in the Spanish language, that being the language which I learned to speak first. I was brought up by my grandmother, lived with her for ten years. My five sisters--I was the oldest in the family-- they lived with my parents. My father was a carpenter. We're not talking about a person who made a lot of money in his craft, but he had a lot of respect within the Mexican community. He was known as "maestro" which means "master" in Spanish. At age nine or ten I moved to my family.

I grew up thinking that most of the people in the United States were Mexican and most people spoke Spanish, and most people ate tortillas and beans, and most people were probably farm workers, and certainly most people were Catholics. All the priests were Irish. That's where the us-them mentality began to break down, because we knew that those white people were a little bit like us. Religion played a strong role in my life. My grandmother would take me to church. I was there every morning and I was there three times on Saturday and Sunday. I grew up thinking I might be a priest. The idea of becoming a priest wasn't a bad one. A lot of my education was received in the catechism.

Everything went fairly well in my life until I was about twelve or thirteen. Then I began to think about religion in a serious kind of way. That was the worst period of my life. I started to think about very abstract questions, like the question of endless time, endless space. I'd think about heaven and hell. The upshot was I had a breakdown when I was thirteen. I'd sit around and count my sins. The priest started talking to my grandmother. She didn't know how to deal with this, and the priest didn't know how to deal with it. Finally a psychologist was brought in, and for six months I was between the devil and the deep blue sea. I was really in bad shape till one day finally I determined that I'm a human being and I'm going to have to live like a human being, live the way other people do. I learned that there are times when you have to give up. The problem was so great that you can't solve it, you have to resign yourself to a certain situation. It was a very tough period in my life and I figured if I survived that, I can survive just

about anything. I would have committed suicide but that was the biggest sin of all in the Catholic Church, because anything would have been preferable to that hell I was going through. But I did survive.

In school I thought I was doing all right, but as I look at my report cards, every year I was on the verge of being held back. As I got older, I did better. By the time I was in high school I graduated in the top five, and then in college every one of my undergraduate semesters I got 3.5 or above, at a time when it was very competitive. As I mastered the language I found that the grades came easy. Junior high school was an eye-opener because there were a lot of people from Texas and Oklahoma there. There was the red-neck mentality that I'd never encountered before, a lot of oil workers who didn't like Blacks and they didn't care much for Mexicans. The town did have a positive attitude towards education. People spent a lot of money on education.

There were bad things that happened to Chicanos there, but I was somewhat immune because I was a top student by the time I was in high school and that sheltered me to some extent. I can't say that I ever had any bad experiences with teachers. I can't say that I ever ran into a teacher that didn't like me. I was a quiet person and I'd do my work and I wouldn't make any trouble. By this time I was regularly working out in the fields, chopping cotton,and I didn't know exactly what I wanted to do but I knew that I didn't want to chop cotton the rest of my life. I was also helping my father as a carpenter on weekends. One semester in my high school years my father had to go to work at another location to build a house, and I went with him. Grapes were the big industry there, not cotton. I was put in a series of classes and I kept getting 97's, 98's, 99's on my tests and in one class, in biology, I kept getting B's. Finally a Mexican guy went to the teacher and said, "How come he is getting a B?" He said, "Oh, that's because this isn't college prep. You can't get A's if you're not in college prep." And that's the first I'd ever heard of college prep. The counselor had simply assumed: here's another Mexican coming in for the grape harvest and this kid's not going to go to college. I was never questioned as to what I wanted to take or what my interests were. Most of the Mexicans saw school as a prison. They hated to go there. We were punished for speaking Spanish on the school grounds, we were held after class or given detention.

Everybody hung around in cliques in high school. I just hung around by myself. I was a pretty good athlete. But I never went out for the school teams though the coaches asked me to several times. Economically and scholastically, I knew that it didn't make any sense to go out for athletics. In class the teachers would hand back the papers in rank order, the highest grade first. Everybody knew it was good to get the first paper,

it was not good to get the last paper. In most of my classes I got the first paper. I was the only Mexican that did that, and so I got a lot of support from the other Mexicans because I could compete with the whites. I didn't really appreciate that until later. I always shared the inferiority complex that Mexicans had, that we weren't as good as those whites. It was in junior college that I realized that I could compete. In fact I was the competition that other people were trying to beat academically.

When I graduated from high school, the teachers voted me the biggest trophy. It was called the faculty cup. I was also the first Mexican that got it. On the eve of getting this award the principal went to the room I was in, and he asked to see me. He said, "I'd like to congratulate you. You're the first one of your race that's ever won this award we're going to give." I was quite surprised when I did get the award. Other people were surprised too because outside of my own class, very few people knew who I was. I was simply another Mexican. In the freshman year fifty percent of the student body was Mexican. By the senior year when I graduated, of one hundred and six people, three of us were Mexican. We were all boys.

I received awards at the end of high school, not much money, two hundred bucks or something. But enough to make my parents see that something good might happen to me. I was recruited from high school, and the junior college experience was very good. It was a small junior college nearby. After every semester they would post everybody's grade point average in the central quad . I was glad to see that I was the top person. I got straight A's. My confidence was increasing, I thought I wanted to go into academics.

But then at the end of the freshman year my plans almost went down the tubes. Because that summer, as in previous summers, I had to go to the coast, as we called it. When Mexicans say "go to the coast", that means you go pick orchard crops in San Jose or Ukiah or wherever. My father actually sent me off so I wouldn't enroll in college again. He said, "You know, it's been fun, but there's a lot of kids to support and you should really go to work and help me." I remember I cried and cried one particular day. My mother said, "Quit sobbing--I never did want you to go to college anyway. I told your father not to let you go." She kept saying this, but it was obvious to me that she didn't mean it. Finally she said, "Look, maybe you'll feel better if we let you go down for a couple of days and visit your girlfriend." So I went down to the Greyhound station and the teller told me, "What do you want?" and I said, "I want to buy a ticket." She said, "One way or round trip?" My mother was with me, and I said, "One way," and my mother tapped me on the shoulder and she said, "You mean round trip, don't you?" And I turned to her and I said, "No, ma, I mean one way." And she said, "All right." And right there I knew that she was really on

my side. She simply didn't want to go against my father because in the Mexican family the father has the ultimate say. So I went and this was the day of registration for college. When I went to face my father, as was his custom, he simply pretended that nothing had happened, and we didn't have a discussion. From a Mexican point of view, I abandoned my family. I was the oldest, I was the only boy at that time. Six women in the family, he had it hard. But from the middle class American point of view, the attitude is nobody can tell you what to do, dictate the rest of your life. I bought that idea, that I have a right to make as much as I can of myself. I still feel a little bit of guilt occasionally over that. But had I not done it, I'd still be in the small town.

History was always my first love from the very beginning. But I was convinced that I had artistic talent and everybody kept telling me, you're an artist, you're an artist. I didn't enjoy it that much, but I felt that I could make a living from it. It wasn't until I got to the state college that I made the switch from art to history. I won a scholarship and transferred to a four-year college. But I learned I couldn't finance my way through. I'd have to go on loans. This was hard to accept, but after working at a grocery store for many hours, I realized that school looks really good even if you go into debt. Right from the beginning I really liked the place. I came into contact with people that were very different than any that I'd ever experienced before, people that had a lot of money.

Here I'm going to school with people whose parents are bankers, corporation owners, people that would go to Hawaii for Christmas, people who would go to Europe in the summer routinely. This was a real eye-opener to me. I had a girlfriend. Her father owned a bank. We would argue. I finally alienated her one day when I said, "Well, your philosophy is that people should work for what they get, people should merit what they get, they should deserve what they get. And you go to Hawaii or you go around the world in the summer. What have you done to merit all of this? You've never worked a day in your life, not even babysitting." She did begin to appreciate my philosophy, but I don't think she liked it that much.

I was working and I was on scholarship and I was on loans, and when I was going to college I gave my parents money. I'd go back in the summer and whatever I'd made, I'd give them. Working out in the fields, I always wondered, God, how come we're working out here in August and getting up at three o'clock in the morning and it's four o'clock and it's still 104. And my sisters and I are working like dogs out here and we're making eighty-five cents an hour. How come we're doing this? People would faint occasionally or get stung by bees. And at one o'clock, when you had to eat, you could hardly see yourself getting back and chopping the cotton. So my socialist tendencies

grew out of that experience. And when I went to junior college I met an instructor who introduced me to socialism as an intellectual pursuit. He was one of the top teachers I've had. So my studies have been the history of socialism. I've never been an advocate, however, I'm not a cause person.

I graduated and I applied to graduate school and got a scholarship. The state university gave me money. It was a good scholarship. There was a very clear hierarchy at the state university in terms of history. I was in Latin American history initially. I was turned off Latin American history because our teachers asked only two questions: "What's wrong with Latin America?" and "What can we do to improve our foreign policy in Latin America?" We don't do that with Europe or with other areas. Finally the thing that determined that I would switch was this hierarchy. I thought I'd rather be with the top group. People would practically sneer at you. So I shifted to European history. And I met a couple of instructors that were absolutely great instructors. I was interested in modern history so that eliminated a lot of areas, Renaissance and so forth. I was interested in the Catholic Latin culture. The process of elimination came down to Spain. I made that decision, and it was a great decision. I got a chance to live abroad two years doing research. I was interested in Spanish socialism and that's what I've researched. The book that I wrote I was really interested in. Every moment that I spent on it I was glad, I was happy.

I never talked to my family about school. I went home every summer and I think my sisters vaguely knew that I was in history. I don't think my parents really knew what my major was. My mother had a third-grade education. My father had a fifth-grade education. My sisters had a positive feeling about what I was doing. My father had a positive feeling, although I don't think he liked to admit it. When I would go home all of his friends would say, "He really talks a lot about you, says you're doing great," but he would never tell me anything like that. I was known as "professor" around town. All Mexicans have nicknames. I was the professor because I had gone to college.

Once when I was going to the university I didn't have a means of transportation and I absolutely had to be there for classes the next day . My father got up at two o'clock and he proceeded to drive me all the way. It was a four-and-a-half-hour drive, and he was dying of sleep. But he drove me there, and I asked him to "come in, pa, and go to sleep." No, he had to drive back and go to work. I remember those things.

The most exciting part of graduate school was being a teaching assistant. I didn't think I'd like teaching. I went

into it thinking about research. I'll teach because that's part of the job, you've got to learn to do that in order to get to the good part. I was surprised that I could get up before thirty people and have something to say. In the environment I came from being vocal is very unimportant. Keeping your mouth shut, the strong silent type, was ideal.

At the university it was assumed that you wanted to teach college. They didn't assume that you wanted to go out and do anything else. They didn't assume that you'd want to go out and teach at a junior college. We never talked about it, but I'm sure there would have been a strong prejudice against that. It was "go out and get a job at a college." It had been a feasible goal; if you got your Ph.D. you had a reasonably good chance of going out and getting a college job.

When I got out in '71 I would have liked to go to a four-year school. I wrote a lot of letters. It was very hard in '71, and I wrote over one hundred letters. I received job offers from three junior colleges. I also got an interview at a university. Evidently the chancellor said, "Listen, all things being equal, if you get a minority, give him a break." But these historians wanted to establish their independence. Plus, they had a man there who was on a one-year sabbatical replacement whom they all favored. I got a very bad reception. They almost didn't want to even talk to me. And they proceeded to give me a Ph.D. examination. I was amazed. I noted a lot of hostility and I just didn't know why. The chairman seemed to favor me, but he was the only one. I know that being of Mexican background helped me get this job at the community college, though I think it was also who I knew. You can talk about affirmative action, or the most qualified, but the old buddy system is still there when all is said and done.

When I first came here, I thought it was just a stepping stone. I'd been trained to do research . Nobody talked about preparing you to teach at a junior college. But the job market started to decline. I thought, well, if things are starting to go downhill, maybe with the affirmative action program I'm probably still in better shape than most people are. It didn't turn out that way. The first offer was a couple of years after I started here. A private college contacted me. In this case I was in the driver's seat. They had good students. It looked like a college campus, the ideal. I don't think they leveled with me totally on the fact that they were trying to get minorities, they down-played that part. But I suspected that I would be the first to be fired if they had financial problems. So in the back of my mind was that if I got this job, I was leaving the security of the junior college where the future looked fairly bright for a small college where the economic future didn't look all that bright. So I turned it down. A couple of years later a professor I'd admired at my college wrote me a letter saying they were looking for a person at the

university he'd moved to. It was half-time in the history department. They were looking for a person that had administrative abilities to work with minorities. I got a little bit excited about it but not all that much. A series of letters were exchanged with a lot of different people and then they had some problems of their own. I kept thinking I don't really want to be an administrator. And so it fell through.

When I first came here I taught Western Civilization, European History; I also taught a couple of courses in Mexican-American History. I like ethnic studies. I've learned that every group of people has a history that's equally valid. I find that in this particular class I'm able to use a lot of my own experiences as illustrations. I started to branch out to American History about five years ago, the History of the American West, Trans-Mississippi West. The bulk of my reading is in American history at this stage of my career. I've come around to something I never thought would ever happen--to be interested in all kinds of history. I'm fortunate in that I'm one of the few people in the department who are still able to teach all their classes in one discipline. I see myself as a historian. Historian is the right word. Not just a history teacher because I've published. I think that's the distinction between being a teacher of history and a historian, and I've always wanted to be a historian.

I always liked learning new things. I'm attracted by ideas and by books, so I always wanted to be a student. I couldn't believe that someone would pay you to learn the rest of your life. I was also attracted by the idea that a teacher had some prestige in the community. As I was growing up in the fifties and sixties I think there's very little doubt that a teacher was a figure that had some status in the community. Certainly teachers had status in my eyes, and I wanted to be like them. Teaching was also a way of achieving social economic mobility; being a teacher was a way for a person that didn't have very much status to rise.

When I got the offers at the junior colleges I wasn't all that enthralled because I knew that they didn't really care what kind of research you did, nor did most junior colleges do anything to encourage your research. They were interested almost totally in the teaching aspect. So the teaching has become important once I left the university, once I got here, and I'm very conscientious in terms of work. I concentrated on teaching because that was my responsibility, because that was what the job entailed. And I've become a good teacher. I'm not the best, and I'm not the worst either. I feel a responsibility to teaching; I've cultivated the craft.

At the university, even though the emphasis was not on

teaching, I had some great teachers. The best teachers were the best researchers. Most people don't realize that. They think it's either-or. Once I got to the junior college I decided maybe I can fall into that same category. I always go in prepared. The lecture is always well organized, and in all my years of teaching here I've always given back papers that are received at the next class meeting. I expect a lot from the students. I have to teach by example. So I've been very conscientious. It's gotten to the point where I actually like teaching. At first I was kind of afraid of it and I certainly was not enthusiastic about it, but as time has gone by I like getting in front of thirty people now.

I always make extensive notations on the blue books. I've never in my life given an objective exam, true and false, or short answer or whatever because at a junior college you're trying to teach people things beyond subject matter, you're trying to teach them responsibility , you're trying to teach them to communicate in written form and also verbally. It's possible to not know your students and not know anything that they've done if you do true or false types of exams two or three times a semester. I like to see what people have done, what they're capable of doing. I like to see if my past evaluation of them was correct or not. The strength of my approach is that people, when they come out of my course, they feel they did indeed learn about the subject matter.

I was the first one in history to get a Ph.D. And people would make jokes about Ph.D.'s which displayed a kind of envy or hostility. But they were very rare, two or three times a year. In my own discipline, in history, half of my colleagues came to junior college from local high schools and they considered it a big break to come to the junior college. And the other half were people like me, people that went to the university, who thought they were going to do university work, and who more or less stepped down to the junior college. We assume we are professional and we're going to teach the way we've been taught to teach. I could be misreading it. This isn't the kind of conversation I have with my colleagues in history. When I first came here, I gave seven F's the first semester I was here, and I had three or four people come up to me and say, "We don't give F's at this school. What do you think you're doing, this is a junior college, we don't give F's, are you trying to hurt the students or what?" As time goes by I've become less uptight in terms of standards.

I make friends with some of the students. A lot of our students are older here. Some of these people are doctors, their wives, corporation owners. So we're not simply talking about an 18-year-old kid,although I've made a good number of friends with people that were quite young. I find that as time goes by I'm more and more beginning to be perceived as a father image. Some

of the students seek me out, come to my office, because I remind them of an uncle that they had back in New Jersey. I fulfill a function in their lives more than simply teaching them history, and it's a role I , after thinking about it, I kind of like. I tend to cultivate a friendship with people that perform well in my classes . One student wound up taking three or four courses from me, he always performed well. I wrote letters of recommendation for him, got him into the university and at the university he blossomed. He graduated, he'd become a history major, he knew all the big names, he'd taken all these courses, he'd done what I counselled him to do. Another individual was an Italian kid from Connecticut who maintained that I looked a lot like one of his relatives. He too went on to a university. Almost all the kids that I maintained this kind of relationship with are people that would go on to universities, people that I guess want to emulate what I've done to some extent.

I try to maintain an interest in research. But now it's downright difficult to go home and work on an article or whatever. It's not my most important priority. I'd rather go home and read a textbook so I can prepare a lecture. But I still think it's important to maintain an interest in research and even in publishing if possible, though I think those are two different categories.

Half of the students are really interested in history. They want to know who the great historians were, who Edward Gibbon was and what historians have said about Gibbon. The other half don't want to pursue it that far, but the more I research the more I'm able to satisfy their curiosity. Historiography is simply more than history; I think they do in fact see me as a historian. They make a distinction between having a Ph.D. and not. I think they're all aware of that, who has Ph.D's and who doesn't; and sometimes for the wrong reasons they think it's important that you have a Ph.D. Most students, all things considered, would rather take a class from somebody that was very knowledgeable about the field rather than somebody who has a passing interest in that field.

With students to have a Ph.D. is really helpful to me to maintain credibility, which I find I have to do being Mexican. I think there are a lot of people that assume that anybody with a Latin last name or any Black instructor got the job because of affirmative action. They don't really belong here, they got a break, and maybe they're not as competent as other people. So having a Ph.D. breaks down the kind of resistance that you might encounter. I know that there are a lot of students here that have never had a Black teacher or a Mexican teacher so there's a certain responsibility that goes along with it. Many of them will get a positive or negative attitude of Mexicans because of the way that I come across in the classroom possibly, seeing how a lot of these kids have never seen a Mexican. So I want to project a professional image and I want them to know that I have

a Ph.D.

My colleagues have an ambivalent attitude about the Ph.D. Most of them started Ph.D. programs and for some reason they had to drop out. They're here and they realize they're going to be here, they're not going to go back to graduate school and get that Ph.D. I appreciate something I couldn't ten years ago: as in most professions, after your mid-thirties you realize that whatever you're doing now is probably what you're going to be doing for the rest of your working life. I'm beginning to feel maybe a little bit that way. I'm beginning to feel that maybe I really ought to get that book out and published because nobody cares what you did ten years ago or even five years ago, they want to know what you're doing now. I don't think that simply teaching in the classroom and being conscientious is enough. I wouldn't be satisfied just being a history teacher. Therefore I think that research at the very least is important. You have to get out and go to professional meetings and go to seminars and talk and get involved in intellectual discussions and do things that are difficult in this environment now.

In the past few years the most important things that have happened to me were the two summer seminars I went to. In the first one I was the youngest member of the seminar. I was the only junior college member. Everybody else taught at a four-year school. The seminar lasted two months and I came back and incorporated a lot of that stuff into my classes. What I'm proposing to do on my sabbatical stems directly from that experience. It really recharges my battery and I started to remember what universities were like again. I think I had almost forgotten.

Some teachers like to work with real down-and-out types of students. They came into teaching because they wanted to help people. The subject matter is secondary. I never came anywhere near that perspective which I think is a good perspective, especially for this level. I find that in all my years of teaching I feel possibly more positive now than any time in the past. Instead of getting burned out or feeling that I made the wrong career choice, the more time goes by the better I feel about this particular line of work. I see it as a profession, and it's permitted me to do a lot of things that I think are important. My priorities include being involved with ideas and being a student for the rest of my life . To be good at it you have to continually read. Teaching has permitted me to learn more and more, to become more knowledgeable. It's also permitted a great deal of leisure . We have three months and we have a big holiday for Christmas, for Easter, and the leisure I enjoy. I've taken advantage of the time for the most part to travel. Even initially I had some pretty positive feelings because I had been to junior college, unlike a lot of teachers here who never went to junior college, didn't know anything about a junior college,

and didn't know anybody that went to a junior college. Many of them I think felt that this was a step down. My wife initially felt something like this; she'd never been to junior college nor did she know anybody that attended one. But my attitude was always different than hers because I'd been through this kind of a system and I'd remembered that some of my better teachers were junior college instructors. So the feelings were not at all negative. But I was ambitious. I wanted to go to a university.

When I took part in these two seminars that I've alluded to with twenty-four individuals from different academic backgrounds, it became evident to me that the junior college, especially the one that I was at, had a lot to offer. Talking to some of my colleagues that went to colleges, you also learn that many of them are bogged down with committees, with publish or perish. That university setting doesn't look nearly as attractive as it did ten or fifteen years ago. On the other hand, the junior college looks pretty good to me. The security here is, I suppose, a very big thing.

Some of the colleagues that I socialize with may know about my work; but even within the history group, most people don't know that I've published anything. Some of my other colleagues have published and I'm aware of what they've done. I've gone out and bought their books and I've read them, but we hardly ever have occasion to talk about subject matter in that way. I read my colleagues' books because I think it's professional courtesy. It's something--if you're working with somebody--you should know what they're doing and become knowledgeable about it. A few years ago there was a display of faculty publications that was quite nice. There were fifteen or twenty books there, but there's no tremendous emphasis in that regard. You're not encouraged to do it, it's not expected, it's not part of your job. Also the economic situation has forced a lot of people to moonlight. Most of my colleagues, they say, we're not monks, we didn't come here because we want to lead an austere life and devote ourselves to whatever, and I can understand that viewpoint. We're not monks. But, given the background I come from, I hardly see this as a monastic life. A junior college like this one--and this one's better than most--I really think does not stimulate the faculty intellectually. There's very little encouragement. At the same time I don't feel that it discourages it. The opportunities are available if one is willing to pursue them. I think the initiative has to come from individuals.I don't complain about it because I think it's the individual. If you really want to do it, I suppose you'll do it.

I mentioned to you before that from one point of view this is almost a vocational school because maybe eighty percent of the students do not transfer to four-year schools. I think that the emphasis should be on teaching. If you want a democratic

educational system then the one we have is pretty good I think. I've been in Europe and I know the pitfalls of other systems. Most of the university students are already convinced that knowledge is power. But at a junior college there's a lot of students that come here because their parents said come here. It's unfortunate to teach a history course where about half of the students are in that category. I pride myself on being realistic, I try not to be too cynical. They come into your classroom but you've got to see it as an opportunity to acquaint them with certain ideas even though they're resisting them. That's a real challenge, you know, to do that, even that little bit.

Times have changed too. We often forget that students are different now than they were fifteen years ago. Even if I went back to the university I think there would be a difference. They're not going to necessarily want to put in seventy hours a week of studying. Maybe they didn't want to fifteen years ago but they did it. There's also a generation gap. This is kind of a market place. I know that if I'm going to assign seven books a semester instead of three that there will be a good number of students that'll say, "Hey, wait a minute, this other teacher is teaching the same class, he's only got three books." Now they're not going to ask, is he trying to acquaint me with new ideas or what is the value of this book. They don't want to go beyond the stage of there's seven books versus three books, and if I assign those seven books I'm gonna have half the number of students. I think that's sad, you know, because that wasn't the case at the university where most people actually appreciated the efforts of the instructor to deal with ideas. It's sad, but you have to deal with it. I can't afford to wind up with under twenty students. The administrators always talk about intellectual integrity, integrity in the course and all that. They never tell us, "It's a matter of bodies, keep them in." But I know they don't like to see declining enrollment, and most teachers are confused because they're getting both of these messages. Of course integrity is important. At the same time we've got to do something to maintain the student numbers.

Ten percent of our faculty is Black or Mexican. There are a few Asians. I was made advisor to the Mexican American Club years ago when students were fairly militant, especially Chicano students. I was asked to give a speech and be candid. I went up and gave a speech and said, "You know, I'm here to teach students primarily, not necessarily Mexican students." So my orientation was significantly different. Yet the students there were very positive about my orientation. A couple of my colleagues that were there, on the other hand, felt that I was selling out. "How can you say something like that?" was the way they put it, and one of them is always spurring me on, saying, "You know, you need to make more of a commitment in terms of your race." In the seventies we were often asked, what have you done for your race today? He still maintains that orientation a little bit. I

never really maintained it, in part because of my training. It was an academic training, a training in history. It's hard to mouth easy slogans if for ten years you've had this kind of academic training. At the same time I see myself as adhering to the Chicano movement. I agree with most of the aims of the Chicano movement. At first I had difficulties because in the area I came from, "Chicano" was a bad word. "Mexican-American" was the right word. I've come to accept "Chicano." At the beginning I was considered more conservative. Now I think by most of my students I'm considered more radical. Nobody wants to hear about affirmative action or prejudice or discrimination or the fact that we don't have enough Mexicans or that the university only has two percent Chicano students. That kind of information is not that desirable today, especially by people that are not Chicano. I still give that kind of information. My ideas on race and on other things haven't changed significantly since I was in high school; sometimes they're popular and sometimes they're not.

Being Mexican was, through most of my life, probably a detriment. At this level it is a positive thing, because that's what differentiates me from other teachers in the minds of many students, that I come from a Mexican background, also a lower class background. I've learned that the background has been positive in terms of teaching , that I can get their interest, whereas I might not be able to if I mirrored their background. At the same time I try not to overdo it, try to maintain a sense of balance, because I think that's being professional. I don't believe in using the classroom to get people to march for a lettuce strike or this or that. My colleague's position which I can appreciate is that school is not an ivory tower, that it's part of society. I mentioned that even in high school I was a loner. I didn't hang around with the groups, I did not take a position that was popular with other people, and so I don't feel badly.

I am aware of race. I didn't marry a Mexican. My kids are not totally Mexican. I'm aware of all of that. In my own personal life many of my faculty members see me as a representative of Mexican Americans and many of them erroneously believe (and I've stopped trying to convince them that I'm not all that typical) that what I think about Cesar Chavez, or whatever, is what all Mexicans think. The group of people that I come from is very diverse in terms of backgrounds, and certainly few Mexicans are in the same situation that I'm in right now. I also try to make students aware of their stereotypes: the Mexican is illiterate, a drop-out from education, a low rider, and speaks in a funny dialogue. And so I perform a positive service just by being here. People come up to me and say, "You're Italian, aren't you?", or "You're Portuguese." They assume I'm not Mexican "because you're not at all like a low rider," and after awhile I think it occurs to many people that the majority of Mexican people are not low riders, that indeed if

I'm not typically Mexican, I'm not all that atypical either. I think people like me do play a positive role at this level simply by being here.

Robert Thatcher is in his forties and teaches physics in a California community college. We interviewed him for all three interviews in his office at the college during the summer of 1981.

There were five of us in the family, three boys, two girls. I was the fourth. We were about a year and a half apart. My father worked in an automobile plant. He was a person who detested being in a situation where people weren't doing anything. He stayed away from the projects, government subsidized or supported housing. He felt that an idle mind was the devil's workshop. When we came in from school if we didn't have anything to do he always kept a batch of ground to dig in. He would say, "Go out and dig up the garden." We just didn't sit around. On weekends or during the summer vacations we didn't sleep in. Everybody got up when he got up and he never did sleep in. Eight o'clock everybody was up. Well, what are we going to do when we get up? Stand up, stand around, go out and dig up the garden. He told us, "When you graduate from high school you can stay here, but you're going to work. You're not going to stay here free and you will go to church on Sunday. You can stay out all night. Sunday morning you will be in church and you're not going to sleep in church."

I think my mother had greater impact in terms of us growing up. She didn't work , oh, up until we were in junior high school. She was home, which I think was very important. The family stayed together, sat down to eat together. We all sat down and had dinner or breakfast or whatever; it was strictly a family setting and my father maintained a very strong hand in the family. He controlled the money. He controlled the decisions, the whole bit, but in a lot of cases my mother had a better knack for making decisions and sometimes it would take a good argument before he would finally admit to what she was suggesting. She was not a party-goer or drinker or smoker. Very religious but not fanatical, tried to be very broad-minded, but very firm, didn't take any talking back. If she said do something, you did it. She was a strong believer in discipline. If she told us to come back at a certain time, we did come back. The oldest boy was responsible for the others. I guess he played kind of the role of the babysitter when she was gone because he was in charge. He disciplined us if need be.

Most of my life I've lived in an integrated city. We had to just about fight our way to school, fight our way back. Living in the city you had the gangs that would have certain territories, based on streets. I think the Black and white kids got along pretty well together. I didn't sense having any

problems in the school other than an occasional fight but that could be with either a Black or a white student. But I think the key thing was we had teachers who really believed in the three R's . I learned how to read very early, I did arithmetic very early. When we came home we had to bring books home. I mean, you didn't come home without a book.I think the thing that helped us through was the fact that by us being good kids, the white teachers took more time with us. We were good students, we were in class all the time, we were fed when we came to school. We just weren't problem kids and we sort of blended in with the white students.

In junior high school and high school I never was absent the whole time. When I went to junior high school I got into the tracking program. I would look forward to getting into a shop class. First time where you could really make something and have the necessary tools to make whatever you wanted to make. I was always mechanically inclined, putting bicycles together , fixing things, so a shop for me was sort of a natural. I didn't look at it as being tracked because it was something I did enjoy. The notion of racism wasn't there. You didn't have the idea that Blacks were being placed in certain places. Older people might have known but it really wasn't something you talked about. All your buddies are taking shop and in some cases counselors are suggesting this is a good class to take. You really didn't look at it in terms of sort of a deliberate effort. One reason I had so much success in shop was because I knew how to read, I knew how to do my arithmetic, and so when we had to measure things, had to draw things, that really wasn't difficult for me. I took mechanical drawing, drafting, for the first time in junior high school. Very good in that, and again, a lot of encouragement from teachers. Never a discipline problem because I knew what was waiting for me at home.

In high school I discovered that especially in chemistry a lot of Black students had trouble and I was the only Black chemistry person that just zipped right through. So they began to look at me as a little brain and that was something that kinda made my head swell a little bit. In the high school, again, the shop program. I took my first science class in eleventh grade. It was a general science class. I took chemistry as a senior and I think I had an A in chemistry. I think that the important thing, though, some of the people that were in those classes were college prep people and I sensed that I was able to compete with them and I began to feel that maybe I wasn't so dumb after all, maybe I could handle some of the college work, and that's what sort of got things started. But in general, most of my schooling involved shop courses--wood shop, metal shop, crafts. I was very good at those. Probably had I felt that job opportunities were there, I might have gone into one of those areas. But at that time you were talking about getting a job in the private sector, and those jobs were not readily available, crafts jobs in the private sector for Blacks. So even though I was a good cabinet

maker, even though I was good in radio shop, there were no images out there with us working in those areas and so I had to look at something where I saw Blacks working. The teaching profession was one of the few areas where Blacks were, and most of us were in the elementary schools or teaching the mentally-retarded classes.

I think probably I was kind of the clown in my classes when I went to high school. It was the only high school in the city, so you had a much higher composition of white students and you've got Blacks in white classes and I was still a good student, but I was kind of the clown. But never to the point where I would be sent out of the class or sent to the dean or anything like that. I knew how far I could go. In English I remember reading a story about how in every group there's always a clown and I can remember very vividly the class turning around and looking at me and saying, "He's the clown in our class." I think that was the first time I really got serious about school even though I was not then in a college prep program.

I really became more aware of racism when I went to college. In high school I guess I thought I was just a student. In some of the shop classes I gravitated towards the more productive students that were more into school. When I went into the college prep program in my senior year you're looking at basically white students. At that time there were very few Blacks in professional jobs that we saw. So you either had to go to work for the auto plant or dig ditches or something like that unless you had some skills. The notion of getting a college degree was embedded in my mind. I was told that the classes would be "too difficult," they would require "too much studying," and I "wouldn't be able to handle" those classes. I had a counselor I can remember vividly. I went in and he saw the algebra, the French and the chemistry and he said, "There's no way you're going to pass those courses. You just don't have the background." But I still insisted on taking the courses and he said, "Well, O.K., but you know you're going to have problems." He tried to discourage me. He didn't prevent me from taking them but he really talked to me very strongly not to take the courses. It was kind of typical; there were some Blacks in college prep classes but not a large number.

But I saw people that I'd taken classes with in the college prep programs. There was a white student; he and I were good buddies and we took math classes in junior high school together and I always got a better grade than he did. In high school he and I had classes together and I'm feeling that I'm just as good academically as he is. And so I think, when you get other students that are taking those courses, to me that's much more of a driving force than what the counselor is saying. Any time you move into a college prep class you feel you're the bottom. If you're Black, you're going to always have the worst paper in the class; it's only after the first few exams that you discover that

you're not the worst in the class.

My parents had already told me I wasn't going to stay home unless I did something, so college was the alternative. My father didn't really have a lot of high aspirations for college. At that time, my mother was doing day work cleaning houses for professors. They would always ask about the kids. She was always coming home talking about the professors, about school, and on several occasions I did go over and help her and the people would talk to me: "What are you going to do? What are you taking in college?" They would suggest, have you thought about being this or have you thought about being that. No--but maybe that's what I ought to start saying.

I think my first year in college was a kind of a discovery period. It was a top community college in the area. They demanded quite a bit from you. I took an exam, an aptitude test. As a consequence of the test they said I didn't even belong in college, that I had probably no chance of succeeding at the junior college. That really didn't discourage me because when I took the test, I looked at what I didn't do or didn't know more in terms of not having been exposed to that, rather than not being able to do that. This counselor, she talked very strongly against my even going to college. She suggested that maybe I should consider going to trade school. But again my rationalization was that I didn't have the background. I mean you ask me to do something in three dimensions. Now what the hell is three dimensions? You ask me something about physics, I had general science. If I didn't have the exposure how was I able to answer the questions? I think another thing that probably hurt was not having college prep English. How did I know I was a slow reader? I got an A in all the English courses I took but no one told me those were the wrong English courses. They ask you to write a composition. I write a paragraph--three or four sentences. Well, they looked at that; this person doesn't know how to write. Who has taught me how to write? I mean, writing to me was three or four sentences. Because at most the questions had about that much space for the answers. So how was I supposed to know how to write a two-page composition in my first English class at college?

I had an instructor [at the community college] that was about the toughest instructor and that was the best thing that could have happened to me. First composition, got an F, flat F. I would go in and talk with him and say, "Why?" and he would sit down with me and point out what I had done wrong. He outlined several kinds of things for me and said, "Now each time you write a composition you want to try to keep it in this sequence." On the next test I got a D . I ended up getting a very weak C in the class but that was the proudest grade I have ever gotten.

If you want to talk about some highlights of my schooling, it's not what happened in elementary, junior high, and senior

high. It started at community college. A second instructor was there, the worst instructor that I ever encountered in terms of knowing how to deal with people on a humanistic level but an excellent mathematician. He taught me, "If you don't do your homework don't come to class, or if you do come to class don't ask any questions because you're wasting my time." He was an instructor who didn't really worry about feelings. He wanted you to learn mathematics. He had no feelings about students' feelings. He would embarrass, he would put you down. At the time it was probably my first sensing of racism because I felt that he did not like me period. I discovered later that he didn't like Black students. I was the only Black in his class, probably one of the few Blacks to get through the calculus sequence at college.

[When I transferred to] the state college, I was not taking any social science classes, wasn't taking any history classes, and all my electives were technical classes. So I didn't get that daily bombardment of what the white man is doing and probably I might have been more sensitive to the notion of racism, even in high school, had I been in those types of classes. But being in technical classes you just don't address yourself to community problems, social problems. It was at that point that I really began to perk up more in terms of what's going on around me, but I still didn't have anything to feed on because the technical classes were requiring so much time and effort. The teachers that I had were very good teachers. I mean in most cases being the only Black in my class was really no problem. It was only when I was a senior that I really had a problem. I had an instructor in my physical science class. I was the only Black in the class. That might have been the low point of my educational experience because he seemed to have been on me every day. That damn instructor wouldn't ask anybody a question but me. He would just grill me--and not on one occasion but on numerous occasions. Several of the people came over and said, "He doesn't like you." But I still didn't use the term racism. I just felt that he didn't like me.

There was a physics professor who was probably instrumental in my finishing the degree at the state college. Not knowing anybody, I was really afraid to go in to talk to anybody. But he took the initiative, you know, very open in terms of saying, "If you're having problems, why don't you come in?" At the state college that was the only instructor that I ever visited. It was tough for me in college, very tough.

I didn't think either of my parents really understood what finishing college or what going to college was all about. My father, when I got my A.A. from the community college, said, "Well, are you finished now?" I said, "No, I got another one to go." And he said, " What you're going to do with that one? What can you do now?" You know, the notion that college prepared you for a job wasn't clear to my parents. I mean, how can a college

degree prepare you for working on the assembly lines? Some of the people that I used to know used to criticize me all the time about "why are you in school?" "Boy, you just don't want to work, that's why you're in school." And I said, "Well, I'm going to get a job when I get out." "What kind of job are you going to get?" "Oh," I said, "probably an engineer or something." "What's an engineer?" You know, they just had no notion of what college was all about. Sometimes you look at yourself as being sort of a pioneer. I was the first in my family to get a college degree.

I was working for the post office. I think the post office is really what told me I'd better get something out of college because it was my second year at community college that I got a job at the post office. I hated it. I could see the games that they were playing. Blacks qualified that they were passing over. I hated the post office with a passion. I could walk in--just the smell of the mail! God, that did more in terms of my staying in school and deciding about doing something than any person could have done. I saw college as important.

Very few of the people that I was around at that time said too much about teaching. It was engineering. Now again, this was basically white students that I was around. Teaching was not one of the talked-about professions, which is kind of interesting. That tends to be the profession, or used to be the profession, that most Blacks talked about. When I went to the state college I continued in the engineering program but concentrated mostly on physics courses. I also began to work more in community programs, began to do some tutorial work. I think the church that I was attending at the time was getting a tutorial program going. I began to feel pretty good about working with people. I was beginning to get some recognition from Blacks and I think from whites. They were mostly baffled. Here this Black is studying physics and chemistry.

I declared the major in physics. I worked very hard in school. It wasn't something that was easy for me. A typical schedule, a daily routine might be: I had an eight o'clock class. I went to school from eight to twelve. I had to go to work at twelve-thirty. I would make sure I had my lunch with me and I would eat on the run. My advisor at the time was a pretty easy person to talk to. After telling him what I was doing on the side in terms of community work, he suggested that I might look at teaching in terms of a profession, if I enjoyed it. After graduating I went back in the Teacher Ed Program and I spent a year in the program. Each year at the end of their program, the professors would have a big party. The year that I went through I thought they didn't have the party but I discovered about a year later that they did have the party but I wasn't invited.

In my last semester at college I was student teaching. My cooperating teacher was a very good science instructor, very

talented and knew how to work with people . We would sit down and talk. First time I taught in an all-white setting. My first three weeks I could barely eat, I was so tense. The master teacher sensed that I was tense. He said, "You got to relax." I kept saying, "I am relaxed." He said, "Look, I'll let you work in the class a few days by yourself, then I'll come back and help you or point out certain things." I told him to be really up front: "If I've got a problem, let me know what the problem is, don't mislead me or give me the impression that I'm doing a good job when you damn well know I'm not." One day out of the clear blue sky he asked me whether or not I was interested in teaching on a regular basis. The teachers at college said that if you're offered a job, don't worry about what grade level, the important thing is getting into the system. He asked me, how did I feel about a junior high school, and about three weeks later I was hired before I even finished the program.

I taught there a year and a half. Then I taught at the high school for two years. While I was teaching there I probably can count on two fingers the number of students I sent to the dean. There was one student who was a hostile son of a gun. He had a lot of problems and I kind of sensed that. I mean he would walk in ready to explode. I made him my helper. He was good on some days and other days he'd come in and he was hostile as hell. He had the fear in everybody's heart. I mean he just got to the point where I had to say something to him. I did. He jumped up in the middle of class and he said, "You Black son of a bitch!" I mean this is before the class. I didn't come back exploding at him. He stormed out of the class. I really didn't know what to expect and after school he came in and he apologized. I said I knew something was bothering him. He said that his father passed that morning. We sat and talked. He came back the next day. He apologized to the class. From that time we continued to have a pretty good relationship.

I left that high school because I couldn't teach beyond general science. The chemistry and physics, the 11th and 12th grade classes, were reserved for these two instructors. So when I went in and I just categorically asked (this was the end of the second year, I had put in for it twice): "I know I don't have Physics for this coming year, but can I teach it the following year?" The chairman said "No." I said, "What about the following year?" She said, "No." I said, "Will I have a chance to teach it?" She said, "No, you're very successful at the level that you're teaching. You work extremely well with general science people and these other instructors don't have the patience to work with them." Hell, I thought, if I develop patience to work with general science people, other people should develop patience. So I said, " O.K." and I left; I went right over to another high school and I talked with the principal there. He assured me that all instructors would have an equal chance teaching any level. I taught there two years.

This is the mid-sixties, the height of the riots, the Black consciousness. Some of it was spilling over into the schools. I was able to establish excellent rapport with both Blacks and whites. I almost switched over to the social sciences because I started being a guest speaker in various classes there and I attended a conference in which I was the guest speaker and I started reading a lot of books on Black history. But I still stayed with the physics. I sponsored the Black Students' Union there at the high school. They wanted to march out, boycott, but each time they talked about doing things like that, I wanted to know, "O.K., what do you want to boycott for?" "Well, they won't let us have our natural combs." "But, we're not coming here to look good. We're coming here to learn." "Well, they're not serving soul food in the cafeteria." "But if they served soul food you might not even eat it. If you're going to march out, march out because they're not teaching Black history in the classrooms, and they don't have any books in the library. March out for that reason."

I had just about finished my course work for the Master's in physics and I was thinking about dropping out of the program because I wanted to become more involved with Black Studies. My advisor said, "Don't do it. You can make a much bigger contribution staying in physics. You would be more of a symbol, more of a model, because there aren't that many Blacks in physics. You've got enough Blacks in history and social sciences that can do what you want to do." And I said, "I still feel that I should be making a contribution to society or to the Black community." And we had several conversations. "Let me suggest this," he said, "You go ahead and finish the program, and then if you don't want to use the Master's, it's O.K., but if you decide to use it, you have it." I decided to go ahead and finish. I think that was the best advice that was given to me.

When I applied at this community college I tried to do my homework in terms of making sure I was acquainted with the community. If I reached the interviewing stage I would have some sort of understanding, some sort of background, of the type of things they might ask. Now at that time it might have been a situation in which, even though I was qualified, the important thing was that I was minority, and that might have been the key factor in selecting me. But I don't apologize in terms of qualifications because I had enough experience teaching. I had worked at all levels and I really couldn't see any reason why I would have been turned down.

So when I came here it was just teach, teach,teach. If I wanted to do something else, I could do something else but teaching would be primary. I had an adjustment to being around just whites, colleagues basically white. The only shocker probably was the notions, the ideas, that students would have about you when you would walk in, in terms of your

qualifications. A lot of students here had never had a Black instructor, had never been around Black people. Now all of a sudden you got a Black instructor. It was an eye-opening situation for them. The first year that I taught here I taught a night class. When I walked in they asked me whether I was subbing for the regular instructor and I said, "Yes," and so when I came back the following week, they said "You're still subbing." "Yes, I'm still subbing." I think it was about the third meeting that they finally discovered that I was the instructor.

Probably most people have a misconception of the community college prior to actually getting involved in it. I looked at it when I came out of high school as a place just to go, you know. It didn't cost you much. I didn't go initially to pick up skills. There was just no place to go. But once I started attending I did see an opportunity to become career-oriented and once I started teaching I could see better that it represented a place for a second chance. The community college is a place where if people don't pick up the necessary skills when they're supposed to, they can come here and do that. I think it's also a place where if a person has the necessary skills but lacks the confidence of being out on their own, being able to make it, so to speak, this is kind of an interim place where they can come and get a feeling for what it is like in college, academically. Because when, I think, you go off to college, there's just a whole new ball game. I think a lot of times people feel that they can't cope with being away from home. Fear of being away from home and not doing well. I had the same sort of fears when I was in college. When I went over to the state college, the fear of flunking out, for me that fear was always there.

I think you have to pick and choose your classes [at this college] but that's even true at a four-year institution. You can take all of the easy classes and the easy profs and when you finish you don't have anything. People that I run into, especially community people, people who I grew up with who now have kids that are on the verge of finishing high school, I sit down with them and say, "Look, there isn't anything wrong with community college." Especially when I see their kids don't really have any strong sense of where they want to go or what they want to get into. If kids know basically what they want to do, what institution will meet those needs, you know, I say, O.K. But when you talk to a youngster and he or she says, "I don't know what I want to do, I'm just going to take some general education courses." Well, if you're in that bag, you might as well come to a community college and get your head screwed on in the right direction and then take off. You don't have to spend two or three years here. You can spend just a year or even just a semester, but the important thing is getting a good sense of direction, especially when somebody is footing the bill.

When you talk about the attrition rate, today especially, being very high, you have to consider the type of students we now

are catering to. It used to be a time when you had a certain group that attended the community college. They in turn transferred to a four-year school. The vast majority of your population at that time looked as if they were transfer people. Over the last five, six, years, maybe even longer, it seems as if it's a recruitment for bodies, bodies being defined in terms of someone being eighteen and over and breathing. I think because of the type of student and the heavy recruitment we're now doing, I think the attrition rate will continue to grow. We're attracting people who shouldn't even be here. In some cases you don't know how they even got out of high school. When you get people here that shouldn't be here, there's no commitment to anything.

It seems like employers ask a little more of Blacks. Maybe not ask but demand a little more. A little more pressure is put on Blacks. I think a little more pressure is even put on me here at this college. Invariably, the first week of school, students tend to ask a hell of a lot of questions, questions that are not even relevant to the topic, and I think it's a situation of feeling you out, seeing whether or not you know the material. I don't sense that same type of attitude when they go into a white instructor's class. I think it's assumed that he or she knows. But I think sometimes with a Black instructor, it's "prove to me that you do know and then I'll listen." If I differ with the book it's difficult for them to accept the fact that I'm saying the author is wrong, period. But I think, once I get going, it's really like someone just opens their eyes. I've seen some white instructors that I know weren't prepared and there's no overt pressure by the students to do anything about it. I've also seen a Black instructor that was ill-prepared and he got a lot of direct pressure. I'm not apologizing for either instructor. I think you should be prepared, but let's treat both people the same way.

Another example: there was a problem that came up in our physics text. The problem was going around in the department. I ran across the same problem and solution in another text. So I made a copy directly from the text, verbatim, didn't leave out anything, and I brought it to the department. Several of the instructors said, "No, it can't be right." "Well, show me what's wrong with it." Well, they don't know what's wrong with it but, "It's not right. It's just not right." I was kind of disturbed. They think they're rejecting my solution. All I've done was just say, "Here's a problem, take a look at it." I didn't take the credit for the solution. I didn't say where I had gotten it. I said, "Take a look and tell me what's wrong with it." But here was something where there wasn't a specific answer for it and it was a matter of--if you didn't think the solution was correct, you had toshow how it was wrong. They couldn't show that it was wrong, but at the same time they couldn't accept it as correct. Things like that, that you don't get too pushed out of shape over.

As another example, our general science textbook. I fought the book bitterly. I said it was a lousy book and a number of people just couldn't accept that, so I just kept up so much noise that at the second department meeting on the agenda was a reaction to all new books. When I came I had several pages of specific notes. When they got to me I started going through very specific points. Before the end of the semester, just about the whole department was acknowledging that it was a lousy book.

I find that, if I have a criticism, I have to be very specific and detail it out, do all my homework; and I think sometimes other people might not have to do all that. One of the problems that you really have to watch when those subtle things are there--you've got to kind of ask yourself, "Are those things because of me, a person, or because of me, a Black person?" I try not to be in the dark on anything but I also really just don't try to magnify anything. You know, sometimes it can be you the individual, period. It's independent of race. Color might be a factor but it might be a minor factor, or it might be a major factor. I can't go into the heads of other people and I try not to, you know.

There was one instructor who had a hell of a time calling me by my name. He called me every kind of name. When I'd see him, I'd just call him another name and he got the message. There was another instructor--I said, "Lcok, name is Thatcher . Some people call me Bob for short, some people call me Robert . That's my given name. Now those are the names that you address me with. Any other name I don't respond to."

I had a student that called me "coach." Hell, I'm not a coach. I'm an instructor; you can call me by my first name, you can call me Robert, you can call me Dr. Thatcher, but I'm not a coach. Whites sometimes will call Blacks coaches. They have a bunch of strange names they sometimes address Blacks with. When you sense that type of thing happening you just say, "Look, I want you to get off and get on here," and I think when you make that clear, people tend to respect you. The basic thing that I try to do, whether it's on a social level or a working level, is to tell people to deal with me as a person, not any of these stereotype trips. Deal with me as a person.

I try to be very academic in nature; when I go into the classroom, I tell students, "I'm not here trying to win friendship, I'm here trying to teach you science. If you hate me and know my science I've accomplished my job. If you end up liking me and learning my science that's even better. If you end up liking me and don't know science I've failed." For some it's tough for them to accept that. Now, whether it's accepting that because I'm Black or accepting that because it's a different teaching situation, I don't even get into that. I'm just saying what I expect. You come to my class to work. I don't want to hear any excuses. When you complain that I work you too hard,

that my exams are too hard, I don't get pushed out of shape over that.

I came out of the university with a Ph.D.--not in physics; it's in education. I didn't know and I still don't know exactly where teaching might take me. I've really enjoyed teaching. I still enjoy teaching; but I kind of figured at some point I might want to do something else, and I felt that with so much experience in education that if I could get some type of training that will pull from my educational background that would be nice. So I have looked at administration as a possible alternative.

I had to look at the degree in terms of where I was working. I think time was a big factor and at the college I could arrange my schedule where I could go to the university and teach here in the afternoons or teach here in the mornings and go there in the afternoons. I think I've struggled quite a bit since I've been in college with somewhat of an inferiority complex, based on not having those six years of prep work--the junior high school time, the high school time. I've always felt that that's a critical period. If kids can get prepared in junior high school and senior high school they can just about go anyplace. But if you try and jump over that training, when you get to college you're competing with people who did the English, who had high school physics. When they went to college they built on those experiences. Well, here I'm going to college and I'm taking physics for the very first time. It's obvious that I have to work much harder. When you have to work much harder and longer than other people you say, "Gee, does it take me that long to learn?" But as you begin to examine it more you say, well, look, if I'm given those same sorts of experiences, then when I build on those courses later, you know, I'll be O.K.

So I thought the university would be a good opportunity. There were no Blacks that I'd ever heard of that came out of the university so I had no models, no images. Most of the Blacks that went to college went to the state college. The university was just a mystery place for me. This lady, a Black lady, was working on her Ph.D. at the time and she asked me, "Why don't you work on your Ph.D.?" Then there was another instructor in the humanities who was working on his Ph.D. And he said, "Man, you should start on your Ph.D. You've got enough time." So it was that type of thing that got me looking at the university; all of a sudden I did see someone that I rubbed shoulders with that was actually there.

Normally it takes you two years to do your course work but I had to spend a year going back and picking up courses. I actually was on the verge of quitting the program. You can get encouragement from home but a lot of times they really don't quite understand the pressures that you're under. You're trying to be a family person, you're trying to teach full time, and you're trying to go to school full time. There's only so much

pressure that you can stand and I was just basically exhausted.

As I worked on the degree and I saw the job mobility around here and I saw whites in administrative positions, and they didn't have a degree, then that began to tell me that the degree is really not necessary. Because I've seen a white without a degree and a Black with a degree and the white got the job. It kind of told me that really the degree is not the key.

Sometimes when you push a lot and you don't back up and regroup I think you reach a point where you start burning yourself out. I think you have to feel rewarded about what you do. Over the last couple of semesters, especially, I've had a very high drop-out rate. I've really been bothered with that because in the past I haven't had a high drop-out rate. I can't understand that because I feel that I'm working much harder. I'm doing, I think, a much better job. I gave a take-home exam; I said, "Get help from any source." But damn it, when you tell students they can get help from anybody and they don't do that, it makes you stop and say maybe I oughta tell 'em, "Everybody gets an A if you just come to class." Maybe when you reach that point, maybe you ought to begin to think about something else, because you've lost the desire to do what you originally set out to do and that's to provide a legacy in terms of something academically.

I've always felt that everybody should have a legacy. Everybody should leave some type of imprint, make some sort of a contribution. Teaching is something that I can do. I can help others by doing that. I look back at my own struggling time in college and I say, I should be able to make it a lot easier for people who come from essentially the same background--that is, where they didn't really get started in school. I try to keep that in mind, trying to leave some type of imprint. When you talk about tearing down racism and discrimination, you can do it in a peaceful way. I've always felt that you could change attitudes by actually being out involved in something where people are not accustomed to seeing you there. I see myself leaving an imprint in terms of doing something for society, helping the races see that they can be together. In the process of teaching physics I have a lot of students who talk to me about things probably that they would never talk about to others. They've never had a chance to just sit down with a Black person and say, how do you feel, what's it like, do you have problems, do you have pain, do you have joy?

One of the reasons I press so in terms of demanding from my students is because I don't see them as being "terminal" students. I teach my courses as if they are planning to go on to a four-year school and I try to adopt some of the same attributes, characteristics, that an instructor in college would

adopt, expecting students to be able to present problems in a logical and organized manner on paper. Students being able to explain problems, being able to analyze--I think those are important principles. I tell students that they will learn more than science in my class. They'll learn how to take notes, how to utilize the notes, how to go look for resource information. If you're having problems, don't give up. If something is not right, you ask questions. I think ninety percent of the time, in order to be successful, you've got to know a lot about the system and I think that's what probably has helped me. Even coming here I know that experienced instructors like new instructors to sit down and talk with them, come in and visit their classes. Again you know, you hate to draw any conclusions, but I find myself initiating more, exchanging tests, talking to people about classroom situations. I had several instructors that came in, but it was about how to handle a Black student, rather than handling a student in general. It had to be something related to a Black problem, you know, if they were to come in. So I think I've really bent over backwards. I do the initiating most of the time. So here again might be one of those subtle things. As an example, two other instructors, or three of us, have eight o'clock classes together. I would always come and wait or make sure that they were ready to go and we'd all walk together. But they didn't do the same thing for me. You see, you're always reaching out but there's no one reaching back for you.

Commentary on Profiles and Research Process

In the following section we comment on what we have learned from the process of these interviews and the profiles that we developed from them. First of all, although issues of minority status are central to the experience of these participants, those issues are far from all-inclusive. Each of these participants could be included in our Final Report to the National Institute of Education in different chapters related to issues of teaching and working in the community college. The minority participants in our study must contend with all the issues of working in a community college that face nonminority faculty and staff: the tension between a sense of standards in college teaching and an approach to grading and testing dominated by a concern for both the progress of the individual student and the retention of numbers of students in the college; the enervation and self-doubt caused by large numbers of students who, pulled by the need to work, conflicts in personal situations, and confrontations with the demands of the subject-matter, drop out of classes; the ambiguity of the Ph.D. in community colleges, the degree seeming to hold simultaneously the possibility of both status and scorn; the separation of research from teaching and the inherent anti-intellectualism that stems from such a basic disjunction; the difficult role of counselors who sometimes become scapegoats for those who fault them for not taking care of all the symptoms of institutional complexities and contradictions; faculty's diminished sense of opportunity and power and the attraction to

administration as a path toward some leverage in the institution.

These overarching themes are in ample evidence in the interviews of a large number of our nonminority and minority participants who taught in a range of urban, suburban, and rural community colleges in California, New York State, and Massachusetts. These issues stem from the place of the community college in the hierarchical structure of higher education. The experience of being community college faculty members involves contending with these issues no matter what the faculty member's social class , race, or gender.

Faculty who are members of minorities in this country must contend with the structural forces that all community college faculty must face to one degree or another. They must also process the complex interaction of racism, social class, power and opportunity, as these factors affect their everyday lives as faculty members in community colleges. Daniel Ramirez's profile shows that it took an act of personal rebellion to free himself from the web of circumstances that acted to keep most of his peers in their accustomed places. Robert Thatcher, despite the persistent undermining by counselors, developed a deep core of confidence that if he were taught something he could learn it, and if he had not been taught it, he could not be faulted for not knowing. That confidence interacted with urgings from his mother and his mother's academic employers to lead him to take the step

to college. For Cheryl Collins it was a different matter. Her parents were so determined that she and her brother receive a college education that they deliberately incurred the physical and psychological cost for themselves and their children of moving to a suburb in which they were the only Black family.

What stood out for us as we listened to and then studied the unfolding of these life stories and the stories of many of the other minority participants was the concrete detail of how often their individual efforts and those of their families were confronted and potentially undermined by their schools' attempts to track them into nonacademic vocational curricula. Thatcher enjoyed and was successful in the shop classes into which he was tracked. But not seeing Black craftsmen or Black skilled tradesmen in the society at large, he wondered whether he would be allowed to make a living in those areas. Ramirez was an outstanding student at his home high school. But when he enrolled in a high school in a nearby city he was automatically placed in non-college-preparatory classes because he was Mexican and assumed to be a migrant worker's son. Collins presents a somewhat different story. Her family moved to an all-white suburb to improve her schooling so that she would be able to go to college. Despite the fact that she was a leader in the school and clearly committed to going to college, she recalls no instance of a teacher or counselor suggesting to her that home economics was not the only career field she could consider. The times, the attitude toward opportunities for women, and the fact

that she was Black, all seemed to combine to track her by omission rather than commission.

These stories are matched by the experiences of other minority participants in the study. One Mexican American participant, who teaches chemistry, recalled how he had spent a year in a study hall period because he refused to take the shop classes a counselor prescribed for him and the counselor refused to schedule the full load of academic courses he wanted. Other minority participants recalled that they were never told in junior high or high school that there were different sections of classes for those who were college-bound and those who were not. Becoming aware of the workings of the system and then fighting it were central in the experience of the minority participants.

Black participants in the study who grew up in the rural South and attended all-Black schools faced a different type of tracking. The stories we were told were of schools' encouraging a sense of options. But the reality of rural Southern poverty and the limited lines of work that were open to Blacks at the time deeply affected career choices almost as effectively as if they had been tracked by a counselor.

The repeated stories of tracking of members of minority groups is not new information. It has been documented for some time (Cicourel and Kitsuse 1963). What stands out is, while the

episodes happened years ago, they were told as though they were psychologically current. Through their individual efforts and with the support of key family members and encouraging teachers, the participants beat the systemic attempts to track them into vocational areas. But the amount of energy it took represents a significant cost. For it seemed to us on reflection, that the meaning of the stories these participants told us is that if you are a member of a minority and of working class origin in this society, you have to work "twice as hard" to get where you get. Some of that work is public, but much of it is deeply personal and private.

Not only is the path more strewn with obstacles for members of minorities, once they have secured their positions, it seems that they often have to work harder, do their job better, more thoroughly, more conscientiously, than their nonminority colleagues. They are expected to be, for example, especially sensitive to the needs of minority students. Colleagues consult them about problems they might be having with minority students, but seldom think that they might have considerable insight in other areas. Collins constantly has to be alert to the interests of Blacks and women. She often goes to meetings and finds herself the only Black and the only woman present. She is under constant pressure to see things from three different perspectives simultaneously. As a representative she never can sit back at a meeting and be simply an individual. Thatcher and Ramirez stress their conscientiousness in their work; they know and live by the

rules and the policies. They are aware that minority faculty are more liable to criticism than are their nonminority colleagues.

Being a minority faculty member on faculties which are heavily skewed toward the nonminority means a constant susceptibility to the not-so-hidden injuries of racism. Yet Thatcher and Collins and other minority participants pointed out that, while they were sensitive to such matters, all slights could not be automatically construed as racist. While the profiles indicate a readiness on the part of the minority participants to be tentative about possible racial underpinnings of actions towards them, the reverse seldom seems to hold true. Thatcher talks about reaching out to his white colleagues by adhering to patterns of respect and civility that are part and parcel of academic departments. He comes to realize that as much as he takes initiative in such matters, his initiatives are seldom reciprocated. He earned a doctorate in education with the notion that his degree would be relevant to his hopes of rising within the system. He subsequently saw that whites got administrative positions whether or not they had relevant degrees. Ramirez, a scholar by training, steers a steady and consistent course that reflects his interest in being a historian in an institution that really wants him to be only a history teacher. He develops an ironic detachment that allows him, in the face of institutional swings of the pendulum, to hold steadfast to his sense of professionalism and quietly to educate those around him about the continuing inequities facing Mexican

Americans in California.

The experiences of the three participants we have presented in profiles are infused with inequities. Much of their time must be taken up contending with those inequities. The energy that must be spent dealing with inequity is a loss to the individuals, to their students, colleagues, and to the total institution whose collective energies and talents might be spent otherwise. Our interviews of other minority faculty in skewed settings indicate a similar pattern of experience. Minority faculty who work within community colleges as a "few among the many" are both actors in, and acted upon by, the larger institutional structure. Community colleges operate at the crossroads of conflict in our society between egalitarian ideals on the one hand and the realities of social class and race on the other. The inequities in the minority participants' experiences give us pause as we reflect on community colleges' ability to provide equitable opportunity for a wide range of students.

Finally, the interview process, preparing these profiles for publication, and commenting on them, have involved us in basic questions of methodology, epistemology, and ethics. Such questions are even more complex when nonminority researchers undertake to study the experience of minorities in this country. The selection of the material for the profiles, the choices of what to include and what to omit, are governed by many

considerations, among which is the tension between fully exploring the subject of our inquiry and the potential vulnerability of the participant. The tensions between being explicit about our sources of data and protecting the identity of our participants are even more crucial when the participants are members of a minority. Being a "few" among "many" makes one's identity more ascertainable than would be the case if the participant were one of the many. Even the choice of words constantly threatens to convey assumptions of power and status which undermine a sense of equity central to qualitative research. The use of the word "minority," for example, is freighted with connotations of power and status that can be rightfully perceived in certain contexts as objectionable.

Despite our attempts to make the interviewing process explicit and fair, the participant's perception of our position, status, and association with funding agencies provided an antithesis to the desired equity between us. This dialectic was intensified when we as white university-based researchers interviewed minority community college faculty and staff. Despite individual efforts on our part and on the part of the participants, the give-and-take between us was affected by the broader history and social reality of racism (and sexism). The potential for distrust that is the fruit of discrimination is not easily overcome in an interviewing relationship between nonminority researchers and minority participants. In a real sense the quality of social research capable of being done in our

country is limited by the quality of our collective social experience.

At the same time, it would be a mistake to overemphasize and overgeneralize the inhibiting effects of racial (and gender) differences between our participants and ourselves. In addition to discussing such issues when possible with the participant, we found that the structure of the interview process itself served to mitigate the tensions that could emanate from racial differences. The length of the interviews and the span of time over which they were conducted gave us the opportunity to try to build a relationship with the participants based on our interactions rather than the broader social context of racial distrust. Moreover, by asking participants to reconstruct in detail aspects of their early life with family, neighborhood, and school, in stressing the importance of the participants' actions and the relationship of those actions to an autobiographical, social, and organizational context, we believe that in most cases we were able to establish our interest in and respect for the meaning the participants made of their experience. That interest which is central to the methodology of in-depth phenomenological interviewing was the most effective means we had of moving toward a sense of equity in our interviewing relationships with all the participants. The profiles we have presented are the best indicator we have of how much movement toward that goal we and the participants were able to make together.

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